

Fast Meals

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It is the end of a long work day, you made a few of your deadlines, but there is still more on your “to do” list for tomorrow. You head home and realize you are hungry and have not decided what you will do for dinner. This is not the best time to make a healthful dinner decision. When you are tired, hungry and needing some stress relief it is easy to choose fast, but possibly high in fat, sugar or salt. Too tempting are the sights along your drive home, Burger King with the special of the day being a Triple Whopper or Popeye’s with the Family Pack of 12 pieces of fried chicken for only \$8.99.

It takes a bit of organization and preplanning, but the pay off is ensuring you and your family make the best food choices most of the time. Suggestions are to:

- Make a menu – it is okay if you are hungry here, you may be more creative, but you can still be wise in your planning.
- Prepare a shopping list and then adhere to it. Remember to shop after you have eaten, otherwise you may find a lot of “impulse” items in your cart, because you are hungry.
- Purchase the ingredients for your planned meals. If you have them on hand you will be more likely to get home to prepare the menus vice driving through somewhere.

Your meals can be quick and simple. There are great grain choices like 100% whole wheat bread or already prepared brown rice. Even a bowl of whole grain cereal like Cheerios with non fat milk would be a better choice than a cheeseburger! Frozen or canned fruits can selected, if you do not have time for fresh. Zap the vegetables in the microwave. Bagged salads can be jazzed up with some water packed tuna or deli turkey, add some canned beans and a light salad dressing. You can order fruit and vegetable trays from the Commissary Deli, which saves you from having to buy five varieties of produce, then wash, peel and cut the items. The trays are high in quality, inexpensive and increase your daily fruit and vegetable intake. There are some healthful canned soups, like the Healthy Choice brands, that you can pair with a bag of light popcorn. This is a quick meal that is great for a barracks room or the temporary lodging facilities. You can find some healthful frozen dinners like the Lean Cuisine, Healthy Choice, Weight Watchers or South Beach diet brand. Pair the frozen meal with a cup of low fat yogurt and a piece of fruit and you have a nourishing meal.

Look for recipes that have five ingredients or less and take no more than 30 minutes from start to finish. Chicken soft tacos are easy – whole wheat tortillas, deli chicken, bagged lettuce, fat free beans and salsa and you are set. Don’t forget “breakfast” can make a great meal. Scramble some Egg Beaters with some lean ham; add a whole wheat bagel and a small glass of 100% fruit or vegetable juice.

You can still have “pizza night” or a night that you designate to get your “Taco Bell fix”, but the key is to plan for those nights. Fast food is not harmful to your waistline when eaten a couple times per month and paired with daily activity. So plan for health.